Legislators Clash Over Nixon Report

By Jack Anderson

In a secret report which Republicans are fighting to suppress, House investigators have charged that President Nixon has spent $17 million in public funds on his private estates.

The report lashes the responsible government agencies for their cavalier spending and calls upon them to "seek restitution" of the "unauthorized expenditures."

The Secret Service is singled out for allowing President Nixon to improve his private property in the name of security. This "has tarnished the image of a once highly respected organization," declares the report.

The cost of providing protection on private presidential property has soared, states the report, "from practically nothing during the Roosevelt-Truman era to more than $17 million during the first five years of the Nixon administration. This is more than the combined salaries of all United States Presidents."

President Nixon is lectured for "imposing burdens on the taxpayers of the nation. Maintaining private residences for use a few days each year," scolds the report, "imposes a heavy burden on the public treasury...

This is the latest word on a scandal we pried open on October 3, 1972, when we reported that the taxpayers were financing improvements at President Nixon's San Clemente estate. A House subcommittee, headed by Rep. Jack Brooks (D-Tex.), conducted an exhaustive investigation.

The findings were approved by the Democrats but rejected by the Republicans, who have now produced their own report. We have obtained bootleg copies of both versions. The differences are quite revealing:

- The Republican version completely ignores the question of paying the taxpayers back for "unauthorized expenditures" on President Nixon's San Clemente and Key Biscayne property. Yet the Joint Taxation Committee, which investigated his tax returns, counted these expenditures as extra income and ruled that the President owed taxes on them.

- The Republican draft doesn't mention the $17 million —$9.2 million at San Clemente and $7.8 million at Key Biscayne —that the Brooks report claims the government spent on the two estates. The Republicans speak instead of $700,000 that the President spent on his San Clemente house and brush off the rest casually as "additional expenditures of federal money."

- The Republican version deletes evidence that the Nixons personally ran up the government gardening bill at Key Biscayne. Referring to the Nixons as "our clients," a General Services Administration memo reports that they "had visited Key Biscayne and some changes had been made in the landscaping plan." This resulted in a $4,685.70 increase in the original bill.

- The Republican report also treats as routine the installation of an exhaust fan in the fireplace of the President's San Clemente den. Not mentioned is a memo from the secretary to President Nixon's attorney, Herb Kalmbach, reporting that the Secret Service had agreed to "pay off the installation of the fireplace fan after I informed him (the agent in charge) that it definitely was placed for security reason and how would he like it if you know who was aspixiated (sic)."

- The GOP version doesn't make clear that the taxpayers shelled out $5,300 for the installation and purchase of 13 lanterns to light and beautify the presidential grounds. Four are still being stored in a warehouse.

- The two versions disagree over a $1,666.90 bill which presidential crony Robert Abplanalp submitted to the GSA for repairs and painting on houses in the President's Key Biscayne compound. The Brooks report notes that "nothing in GSA's records indicates under what authority Mr. Abplanalp had acted in contracting for work for which GSA assumed responsibility." More charitably, the Republicans conclude that Abplanalp had acted in "a good faith manner."

- At San Clemente, the government shelled out $57,582 for a wall to encircle the 26 acres of land which the President originally purchased. He later sold all but six acres to Abplanalp. Yet the Brooks report notes that "no effort was made to reimburse the federal government in any way." Defending the President, the Republican draft argues that Nixon didn't benefit from the wall.

- Both reports agree that the President paid only $1,043 for paving at San Clemente while the taxpayers wound up with a $21,044 bill. The Brooks report cites a memo from the President's architect, Hal Lynch, suggesting the paving cost "be shared equally by the contractor, General Services and the Secret Service." The GOP document preferred to view the paving as serving "a protective purpose or incident to other protective work."

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